

Elder Abuse

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WARNING:

You are about to be challenged.



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Challenging Goals

- **Imagine** elder abuse
- **Ponder** elder abuse
- Take it beyond a sad fact and **understand** it as the trauma it really is
- **Acknowledge** its existence
- **Believe** this:
 - Anyone can be a victim
 - Anyone can be a perpetrator



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What do we mean by “elder abuse”?



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Reportable Abuse: California

- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Financial Abuse
- Neglect
- Self-Neglect
- Abandonment
- Abduction
- Psychological (optional report)

Welfare and Institutions Code 15610



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Let's go through a few examples.

These examples are based on real cases.



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Examples of Financial Abuse

- A 55 year old woman threatens her mother with placement in a nursing home if she doesn't buy her a car.
- A 30 year old man befriends a widow who is feeling lonely & depressed. He obtains the password for her ATM card so he can "help" her buy groceries and then "helps" himself to extra cash



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Examples of Physical Abuse

- Pulling hair
- Throwing food, objects
- Denying access to pain medication
- Slapping/hitting/punching



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Explanation of Neglect

- Failure of the caregiver to provide appropriate care
 - Food, clothing, and shelter
 - Medical care
 - Personal hygiene
 - Health and safety hazards



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Examples of Neglect

- Person is lying in urine and feces for hours or days
- Person is dirty, has elongated nails and matted hair, is living in filth
- Person becomes malnourished and dehydrated because food and water are not provided
- Person develops deep, open pressure sores (down to her bones) on her back and heels because no one repositions her



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How common is elder abuse?

It's a good question, but a hard one to answer.



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Why is it hard to answer?

- Reluctance to admit
 - Shame
 - Fear of losing independence
 - Fear of being moved
- Unlike kids, older adults can quietly disappear from society without much inquiry
- May be too incapacitated to report
- Signs of abuse may be missed/mistaken for “usual aging”



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So here's our best guess but we know it is an underestimate.

The National Elder Abuse Incidence Study published in 1998 attempted to quantify the problem.



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Elder Abuse - National Incidence

- 236,000 reports of seniors abused at home in one year
- 50,000 reports of abuse in nursing homes in one year

National Elder Abuse Incidence Study, 1998



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Elder Abuse Incidence

FOR EVERY REPORT OF ABUSE....

5 GO UNREPORTED

National Elder Abuse Incidence Study, 1998



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That means at least one million seniors were abused in 1998.

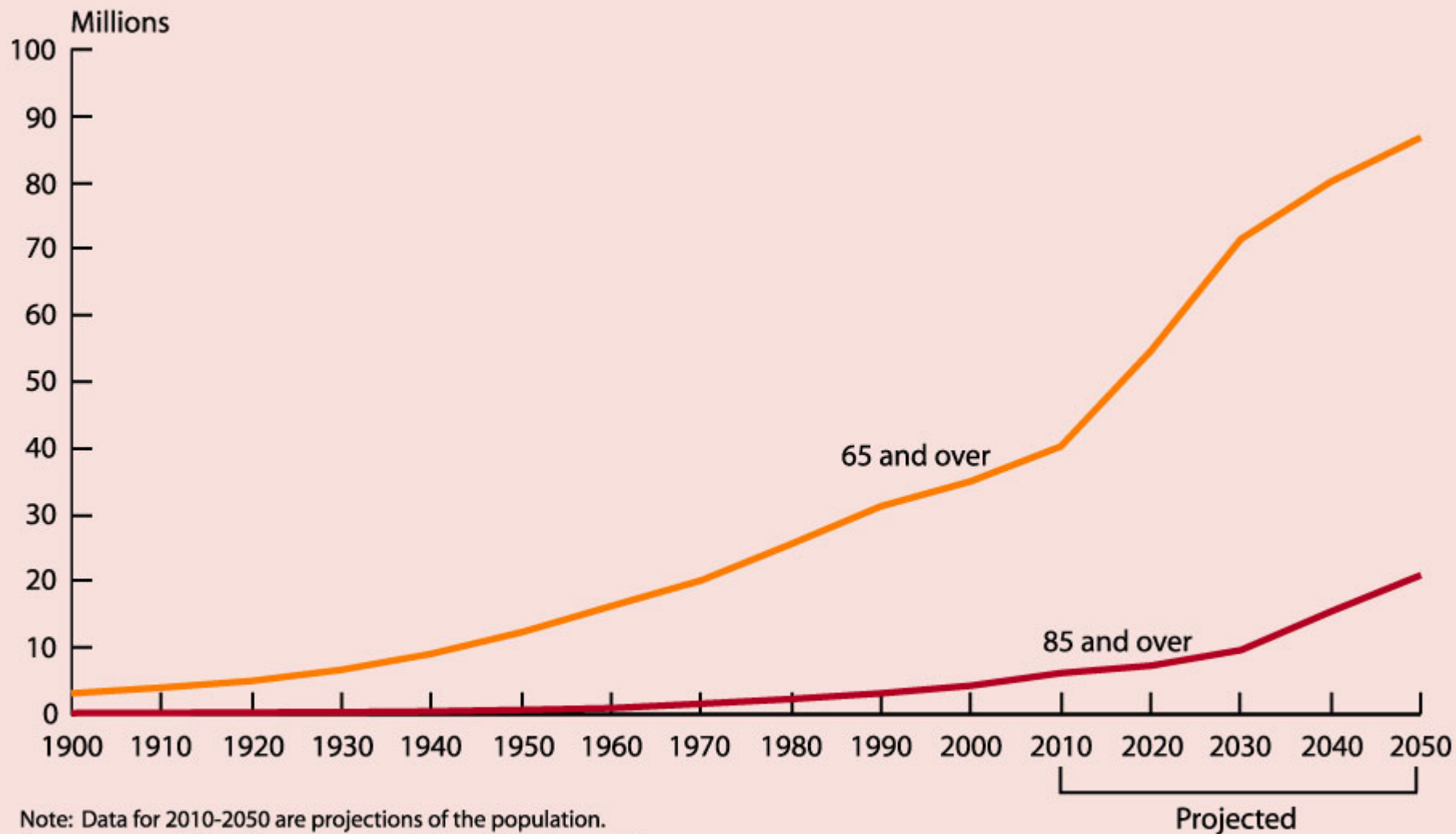
Now let's look at what is happening to the numbers of seniors in the United States.



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Number of people age 65 and over, by age group, selected years 1900-2000 and projected 2010-2050



Note: Data for 2010-2050 are projections of the population.

Reference population: These data refer to the resident population.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census and Projections.

Why have a special category for elders?



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Dementia as a Special Issue

- Alzheimer's Disease is the most common type of dementia
- Dementia is typified by memory loss and other problems with thinking/cognition
- Dementia gets more common as we age
 - Over the age of 65, about 3-5%
 - Over the age of 85, about 40-50%



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Dementia and Abuse

- May be unable to report abuse
- May not be believed
- May be unable to recognize abuse



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Why is this happening?

- Mental Illness?
- Violent society?
- Entitlement?
- Stress?
- Power and control?
- Ageism?



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Questions to Ponder

- What is our responsibility as family members? As neighbors/friends?
- What is our responsibility as a society?
- What role could/should the government play in this issue?
- What policies currently exist that either allow or prevent elder abuse?



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Vulnerabilities to Mistreatment

- Difficulty defending oneself, physically and emotionally
- May be more dependent on others for assistance than in the past
- Fear of losing independence if a report is made, so more susceptible to threats



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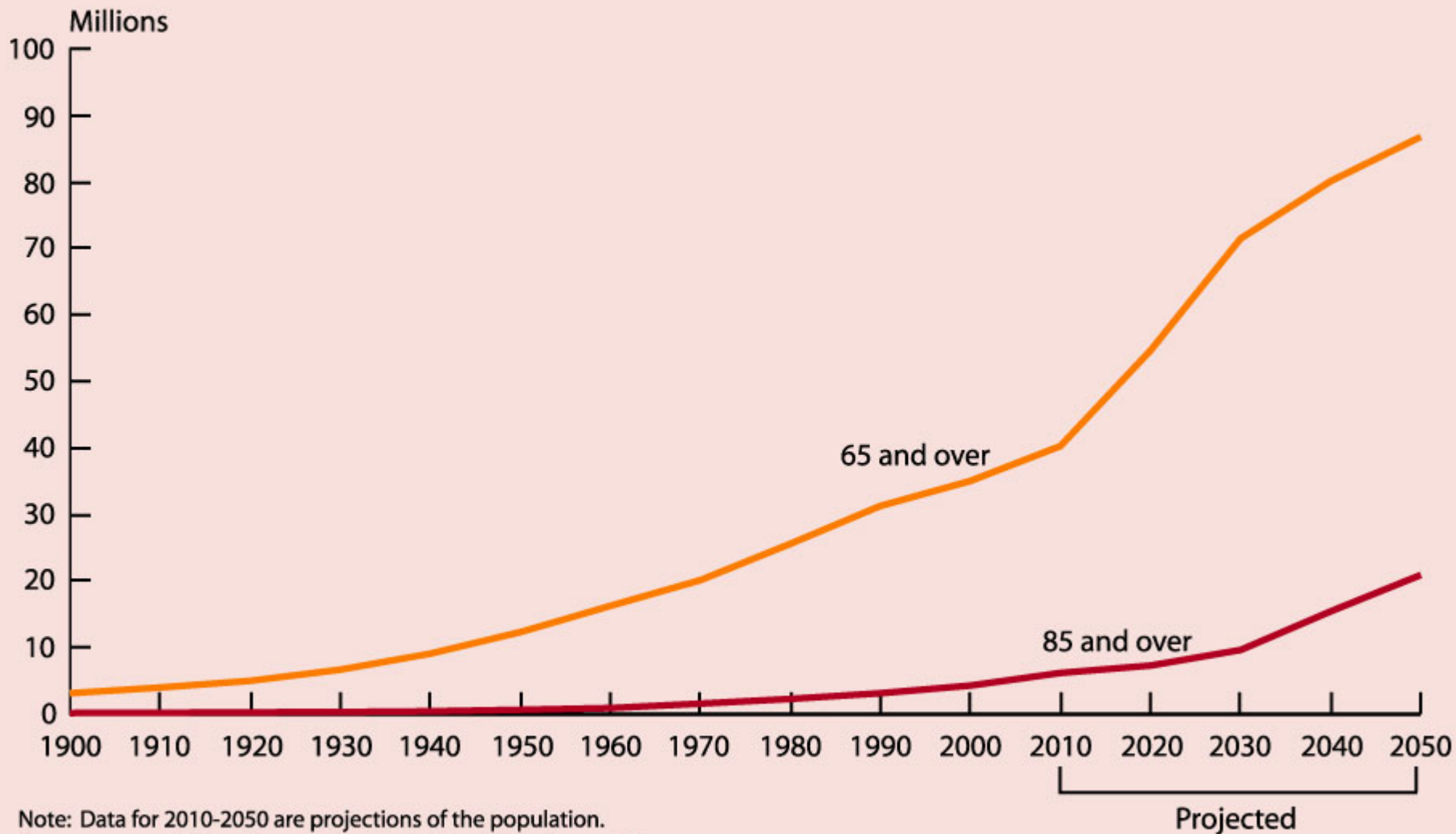
Why Is this important?
Why should **you** care?



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Some day this could be you.

- Anyone can be a victim
- Anyone can be a perpetrator



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